

# The Benefits of Education to Our Residents and to California

A CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION FACTSHEET

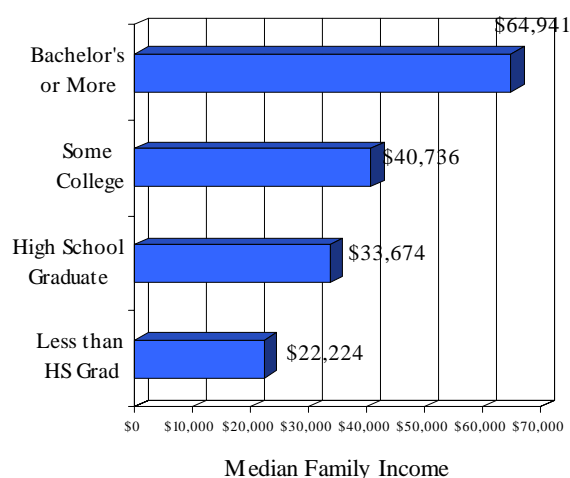


Education has long been recognized as a public investment that yields both private benefits to our residents and collective benefits to California. These multiple benefits have been clearly illustrated by recently published information on the national level about the relationship between level of educational attainment and various measures of individual gain and economic and social benefits that accrue to a society (Mortenson, T.G., *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, No.61, July 1997). While this information describes national trends, they are likely to be operative in our state as well.

## Personal Benefits

The most common indicator of personal benefit accrued from additional education is a rise in income. Display 1 shows average annual median family income by level of educational attainment. On the average, families in which the primary wage earner is a high school graduate can expect an annual income to be 52 percent greater than families headed by those who have not completed high school. On the average, those families whose head of household has a bachelor's degree or higher can expect an income annually that is nearly twice as much as families headed by a high school

**DISPLAY 1** Median Family Income Nationally, by Level of Educational Attainment, 1993



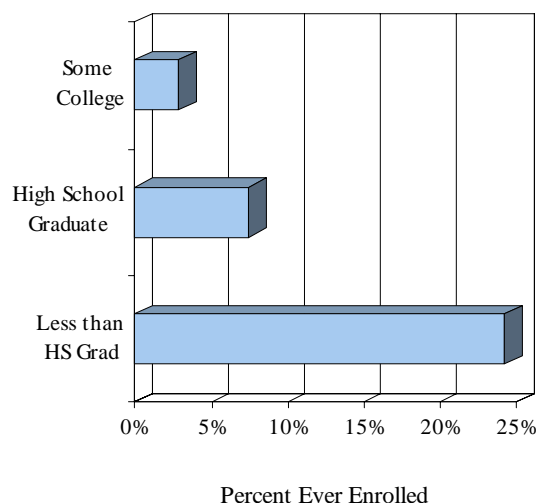
graduate. With greater income comes additional personal options, such as home ownership, health insurance coverage, income from savings and investments, educational resources in the home, college opportunities for children, and other goods and services that may be considered as luxuries.

## Public Benefits

This fact sheet summarizes two types of collective benefits: (1) those related to public funds, and (2) those related to levels of involvement or contribution to society.

*Benefits related to public funds.* Higher incomes often result in larger contributions to public tax rolls. In addition to the positive monetary support of public services, the likelihood of individuals participating in programs that are funded by public monies, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Supplementary Security Income (SSI), Food Stamps, Housing Assistance, or Medicaid, decreases as their levels of educational attainment increases. Display 2 illustrates this relationship.

**DISPLAY 2** Participation in Government Assistance Programs Nationally, by Level of Educational Attainment, 1988



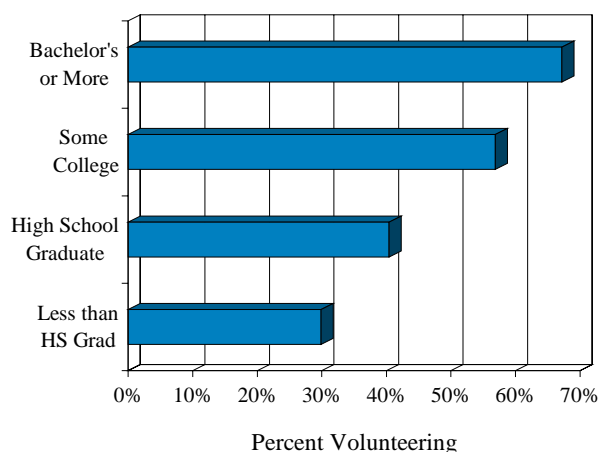
*Benefits related to societal involvement.* While higher levels of education are positively related to increasing levels of monetary support to the society, they are also associated with increasing levels of personal involvement in that society. Displays 3 through 6 portray four examples of these differences in societal involvement:

- ♦ Large numbers of Americans donate their time through volunteer activities, as Display 3 illustrates. As educational level increases so does the proportion of each group that is involved in volunteer work.
- ♦ Whether one views attendance at cultural arts activities as a personal benefit or as a contribution to

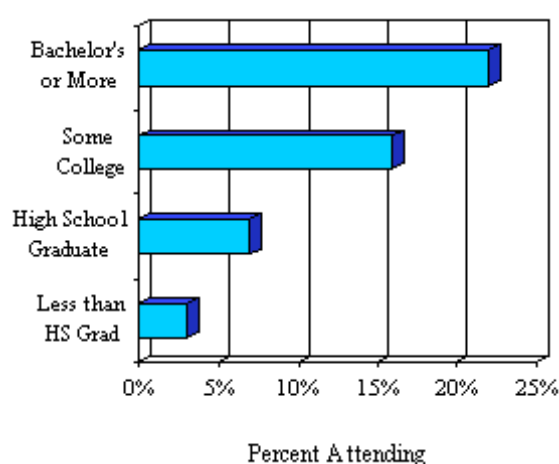
sustaining the national interest in the cultural arts, the likelihood that individuals participate in these activities increases with additional education, as shown in Display 4.

- ♦ As a democracy, America's political system depends on broad participation from its citizens. As Display 5 demonstrates, participation in presidential elections increases as level of educational attainment rises.
- ♦ Another characteristic of a healthy society is broad participation in one's community. As level of education increases, the likelihood of an individual becoming an active leader in the community also grows, as Display 6 illustrates.

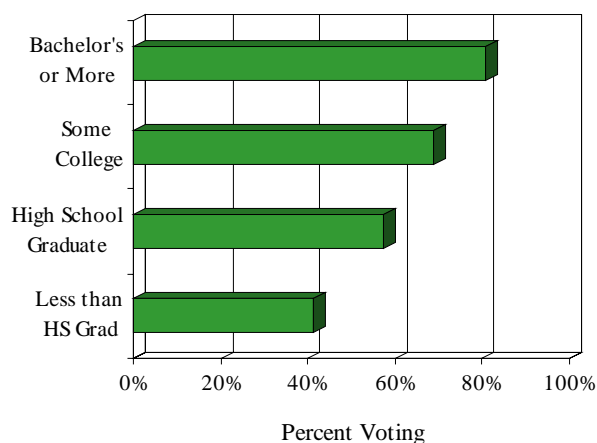
**DISPLAY 3** *Involvement in Volunteer Work Nationally, by Level of Educational Attainment, 1993*



**DISPLAY 4** *Attendance at Cultural Arts Activities at Least Once a Year Nationally, by Level of Educational Attainment, 1992*



**DISPLAY 5** *Participation in Presidential Elections Nationally, by Level of Educational Attainment, 1992*



**DISPLAY 6** *Leadership in Communities Nationally, by Level of Educational Attainment, 1992*

